

Write down scores for each category and total them up.



# river report card

Our streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands are far more than just a part of the scenery - they are the lifeblood of the environment. They provide homes for wildlife and plants, water supplies for homes and industries, and places of recreation and enjoyment for all of us. In addition, rivers reflect the health of the surrounding land because they are the collection point for water coming from all around.

But how can you tell if a river is healthy? It is actually quite simple to estimate the overall condition of the river. You do not need high-tech equipment or chemicals, but you will need your senses, your common sense and a genuine concern for the river.

In the next page, we have proposed categories in which you can make judgments on your local river. In each category, you can rate your river and then combine your scores to come up with an overall rating for the area. You can then compare different rivers or different sites along the same river. Keep good notes on each site, recording the location, date and details on anything special that might vary from visit to visit. This is important so you can compare your scores if you visit the site over time.

## OVERALL RATING

What do you think of this site?  
(Draw a mouth for the face according to the total score)



Mouth guide  
Scores



## Site Description

Name of waterway / site :

Date :

Time :

Weather :

Has it rained in the past 24 hours?  
(if yes, was it heavy?)

Name :

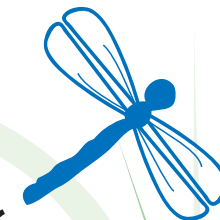
Contact details :

School / organisation :

Crew size :



Global Environment  
Centre



## category 1

### land use

List down the different land uses in the area.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | Lots of industry nearby, most land are cleared, bare soil, disturbed environment |
| 2-4    | Some industry, some land cleared   |
| 5-9    | Some commercial, recreational and residential use                                |
| 10     | No human use at all, in its natural state.                                       |

\* Create a list of places where the water is coming from.

Your Rating

## category 2

### rubbish

Make note of the type of rubbish that can be found in the water or surrounding area (this include human made waste and natural litter such as leaves and animal faeces) and how much is there.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | Lots of human made rubbish such as tyres, plastics and cans, oily films and excessive algae growth |
| 2-4    | A lot of human made waste such as cans and plastic, or algae                                       |
| 5-7    | Some human made waste such as garden waste and plastics  |
| 8-9    | One or two pieces of human made waste and local vegetation such as leaves floating in the water    |
| 10     | No human use at all, preserved in its natural state  |

\* If rubbish seems to collect in one area, take photo of the area each time you monitor your site so you can compare rubbish build up.

Your Rating

## category 3

### pipes & drains

Look for pipes, drains or trenches leading into your waterway. Record what's coming out of the pipes, drains or trenches.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | A number of pipes from industry and/or sewage treatment and/or urban storm water |
| 2-4    | Some pipes or trenches   |
| 5-7    | No pipes from industry, but some urban storm water drainage                      |
| 8-10   | No pipes or drains   |

Your Rating

## category 4

### extra structures/modifications

Record any extra structure/modifications along the river at the site such as weirs, concrete banks, piers or any artificial modification of the water flow

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | A number of artificial structures, large modifications of river's natural flow |
| 2-4    | Some artificial structures or some flow modifications                          |
| 5-7    | No concrete structures or minimal modifications of water flow                  |
| 8-10   | No extra structures or artificial modifications                                |

Your Rating

## category 7

### vegetation



Look at the banks and the land extending from the river. Note if vegetation is natural or introduced and whether erosion occurs or not.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | Lots of introduced plants, much clearing, bare ground, pasture. Extensive erosion.                   |
| 2-4    | Mixed plants, much clearing, large, eroded areas   |
| 5-7    | Mixed native and introduced plants. Some clearing. Small corridor of vegetation. Minor erosion.      |
| 8-9    | Mainly native plants, minor clearing. Natural vegetation extending up to 30m from water. No erosion. |
| 10     | Mainly undisturbed native plants, extending up to 30m from water. No erosion.                        |

Your Rating

## category 8

### vertebrate animal life

(birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians & mammals)

Sit by your river and look for vertebrate animal activity. Record both the variety and number of animals. Look for fish and listen for frogs.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics                            |
|--------|--|
| 0      | No animal life visible at all              |
| 1-2    | One type of animal life                    |
| 3-5    | Two types of animals found                 |
| 6-8    | Three types of animal life found           |
| 9-10   | More than three types of animal life found |

Your Rating

\* Using bird books, learn the names of the birds found around the site and compile a list.

## category 9

### water movement

(voice of the river)

How fast does the water flow?

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics  |
|--------|--|
| 0-1    | Stagnant, still and shallow                              |
| 2-4    | A little movement of mixing of water, shallow depth      |
| 5-7    | Movement at the speed of a slow walk, wind waves         |
| 8-9    | Good movement, the speed of a fast walk, wind waves      |
| 10     | The speed of running or faster, wind waves, bubbly sound |

Your Rating

## category 5

### smell

Take a water sample and record the smell.

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics                                     |
|--------|---|
| 0-1    | Very strong, unnatural chemical smell               |
| 2-4    | Strong, unnatural smell                             |
| 5-7    | Stronger decaying smell, or slight, unnatural smell |
| 8-9    | Very slight smell, perhaps natural decay            |
| 10     | No smell / natural smell                            |

Your Rating

## category 6

### water conditions

What colour is the river's water? Is the water clear or turbid?

#### rating

#### characteristics

- | rating | characteristics   |
|--------|---|
| 0-1    | Milky brown or green colour with particles and scum. You can hardly see through it! |
| 2-4    | Cloudiness and/or greenish colour with particles or film                            |
| 5-7    | Some colour and particle  |
| 8-9    | A little colour   |
| 10     | Colourless and as clear as tap water  |

Your Rating

\* Record the flow of the water (slow, rapid, not flowing).

## map your area

Draw your local area map here and use a key to identify and record the different types of land use/human activities or other points of interest.